

William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital

VA IACUC Policy #25-13

Tumor Burden in Rodents

Policy: The IACUC requires special monitoring of animals during times of increased risk of morbidity or mortality.

Responsibilities:

1. Role of the Investigator:

Animals that have experimental or spontaneous tumors must be euthanized before the tumor affects the animal's well-being. Euthanasia of animals with tumors is indicated if:

- Tumor burden causes an impediment to normal movement or normal body functions of the animal
- Tumor burden causes a loss of body condition, resulting in a body condition score of less than 2, using the *Lab Animal Science* article "Body Condition Scoring: A Rapid and Accurate Method for Assessing Health Status in Mice", Vol. 49, No3, June 1999.
- For some tumors, weight loss is an acceptable substitute for body condition scoring; a maximum of 15% weight loss is permitted
- There is skin necrosis over the tumor
- Animals exhibit extreme lethargy, such that they are unresponsive to a mild stimulus
- Clinical signs indicate the primary tumor(s) has metastasized, e.g., seizures, labored breathing
- The tumor or its sequelae are causing pain as evidenced by chewing or excessive grooming of the tumor and/or surrounding area.

The investigator must include in the animal protocol a written description of clear endpoints that fall within the above guidelines, and adhere to the approved endpoints. If exceptions to the guidelines are requested, a clear, scientifically justifiable rationale must be described. In addition, any measures that will be taken to ensure the animals' comfort and well-being must be clearly described in the protocol and subsequently provided to the animals. All monitoring and treatments must be documented.

2. Role of the Veterinary Medical Consultant (VMC) and Animal Research Facility (ARF) staff:

The VMC will investigate any observed tumor to determine if they meet the approved endpoint criteria. If so, the investigator will be contacted so that euthanasia can be performed as soon as reasonably possible. If the investigator is not available or does not respond, the VMC or ARF supervisor will arrange for timely euthanasia.

3. IACUC Oversight: The IACUC shall review proposed protocols for conformity to these guidelines, and enforce compliance.

Questions: Any questions on this policy should be directed to the A.O. (280-7222).

References:

- *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, NRC, 2011.

- Code of Federal Regulations, Title 9, Chapter 1, Subchapter A - Animal Welfare
- VHA Handbook 1200.07
- 2013AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia.
- *Lab Animal Science*, “Body Condition Scoring: A Rapid and Accurate Method for Assessing Health Status in Mice”, Vol. 49, No3, June 1999.

Effective date: A draft was distributed, reviewed and approved at the 9/13/2010 and IACUC meeting. Subsequent review and approval: 7/11/2011, 11/07/12, & 11/06/13.